

Reflections of identification of key stakeholders of a foreign mission

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<p>While working in Hong Kong 2018 - 2020 for the Finnish Consulate General I had a great opportunity to observe the Finnish lifestyle and working culture in a totally different atmosphere and cultural landscape. The Consulate lives in a small Finnish bubble facilitating Finns and is trying to serve and communicate the lifestyle to Chinese-British-Hongkongese hot pot of cultures and languages.</p> <p>This thesis studies the communication plans written in the diplomatic missions in South East Asia. By studying and comparing the plans, this case study peels out the main communicational messages the Consulate should emphasize. These findings made by content analysis leads to a necessity of identifying the stakeholders and their needs, as well creates the question of optimal message content style and channels used.</p> <p>To recognize and eventually categorize the stakeholders, marketing related theory of readiness stage recognition by Kotler and Armstrong (2015) is used. Theoretical support for the communication planning and content is found from the vast publications of Elisa Juholin.</p> <p>The conclusion part of this paper presents main stakeholders of the Consulate and suggest how to communicate with them and what channels to use for the communication. Improvement ideas for planning process of the communication is made by presenting steps to follow from communication targets to resources.</p> <p>There is also "a snapchat" of the communication channels' landscape in 2019-2020. Just as the idea of Snapchat app this picture is not written to be read for more than a brief period. It will be yesterday's news sooner than expected. But this briefing of the current trends is necessary for the communication work. It gives a possibility to try to see and choose the right digital places to be now and in the future.</p> <p>The research and writing work were mainly done by the end of 2019 expecting 2020 to be mostly focusing on strong continuous of tourism, education and food & beverage export related messaging. The everyday work and nature of communication changed dramatically in summer 2019 because of the widely spread demonstrations against legislation matters in the city, challenging relationship whit Chinese Central Government. The landscape was reshaped again during the Chinese New Year in January 2020 after the outburst of Corona virus. The aftermath and even surviving the COVID-19 pandemic that started some 1000 kilometers away from Hong Kong, or even closer just from the other side of the border reminds to be seen.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Essential part of successful communication is to recognize stakeholders and communicate to and with them via right channels and with right type of messages. Second step is to plan the communication well; according to targets, resources and budget. This Thesis will analyze the communication of the Consulate General of Finland In Hong Kong and Macao by using theoretical models presented in Literature Review chapter 4. Suggestions regarding new ideas for planning the communication with different stakeholders the best possible way are presented as an outcome in chapter 7.

Thesis is written while working for the Consulate General in Hong Kong with the support of the Finnish colleagues and by using the vast knowledge of the local staff. Nevertheless, it cannot be called commissioned work from the Foreign Ministry or the Consulate.

Consulate General in Hong Kong has a brief communication plan, which is compared in this Thesis with the similar plans of Finnish Embassies in Singapore and Beijing. These three plans are created by Foreign Ministry (FM) employees in Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Beijing. The purpose of these documents is to clarify the communicational focus points in the local Embassies and Consulates. The plans referred can be found in Appendix 1-3. The documents are confidential and left out from the public version.

Singapore's and China's plans are made to the same Ministry template which makes them very well compatible. Hong Kong's version follows the same headlines but is not made to the same template.

Hong Kong's plan is taken to this study because the headline correlates better with the headline of Singapore's plan but since the plan of whole China is made to same template with Singapore these three documents form an interesting research material source. The material is comparable technically but also culturally.

The communication plans are strictly focusing on communication, branding and diplomatic relationships of the Embassy or Consulate towards the local country and citizens. None of the plans include any part related to the internal communication, silence knowledge or the working culture within the Missions. The plans are also topic orientated and focus on the main messages and themes to communicate but do not offer any proposals what the messages should consist, how to plan the communication or what channels would be recommended to use.

This narrows naturally the subject of this Thesis and the research questions to external communication and the topic of internal communication is mentioned only briefly when essential for the success of communication in overall. Some observations and suggestions are made regarding internal communication habits so that the acts would support the public side better.

This study excludes crisis management and political influence and lobbying because there is already quite clear instructions and maneuvers for Foreign Ministry's crisis work.

Hong Kong is currently competing with Singapore about the title of the Business Hub of Asia. These two cities are seen as rivals and good candidates for businesses to open their offices in Asia. Many companies not yet operating in Asia are heading to Chinese markets and starting the venture from Hong Kong or Singapore.

Even though Hong Kong is technically Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, the culture, everyday life and politics vary widely from so called Mainland China. From Hong Kong perspective the whole situation is quite delicate and during the fall 2019 people of Hong Kong fell again to the strongly divided ideological camps of "Pro-Beijing" and "Pro-Democracy" and the demonstrations turned to a very violent clashes. These political, socio economic, generation divided sides have different hopes and plans for the area in the near future. This creates pressure to the communicational messages too and makes the stakeholder recognition slightly more complicated.

The structure of the thesis is following:

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and gives general background info regarding the organization chosen. Chapter 2 introduces more detailed characteristic of the organization and communicational challenges it faces. Chapter 3 focuses on research questions and explains the scope of the research. Chapter 4 opens up the theories used for this case study; communication evaluation and planning, stakeholder identification, buyer readiness recognition and stakeholder communication especially in social media. Chapter 5 focuses on research process and describes tools used such as content analysis. In chapter 6 findings are described and research questions answered by using the theories studied earlier. Chapter 7 is about suggestions and recommendations especially regarding usage of social media channels. The last chapter, number 8, is for conclusion and follow-up research suggestions.

2 Topic introduction

This chapter will give some essential information about the organization studied and its role in Foreign Ministry as well as describe current state of communication planning. The chapter also explains the importance of country image building and consular services sector in daily life of Consulate. Besides the background info the research problem, questions and objectives are presented.

2.1 Consulate General of Finland in Hong Kong and Macao

“The Ministry for Foreign Affairs promotes the security and welfare of Finland and the Finns and works for a secure and fair world.” This means topics from Åland Islands to development policy and migration. The missions around the world serve Finns abroad and the Finnish society in general. The activities and services provided are governed by laws and agreements, but major part of the work is also promotional and political work. The emphasis between the actions and tasks varies depending on the country. In countries where Finns travel frequently to provide services plays the major role. In some parts of the world the focus is on foreign and security policy and building country brand. (FM 2019a.)

Consulate in Hong Kong is one of the smallest service points and teams Finland has amongst the embassies and consulates excluding the singular honorary consulates. The team consists of two Finnish diplomats whose wide responsibilities could summarize to consist diplomatic relationships and administrative work. There is also one locally hired Finnish citizen and two local persons working as assistant and driver. An undergraduate intern from Finland complements the team whenever possible in 3 to 6 months cycles.

The main communication channels used are Facebook and locally modified and updated Foreign Ministry web pages (www.finlandabroad.fi/web/hkg). There is also Instagram account for sharing some feelings by pictures. The Consul-General hosts several events a year at her residence and maintains good relationship with the local press. Tools for following media and sending press releases are available but not widely used. When it comes to the communicational services offered based on the legislation the team is heavily supported from Finland. For example, the basic text and information in web sites are translated in Finland to Swedish and English and in case of emergency the team would be guided and helped out from Finland, even by sending more skilled communication professionals to help to solve the situation if needed.

Even though the support and biggest working teams are in Finland all the local communication and everyday work is done in the Consulate by the small local team. This means reacting to the local crises and adjusting the web page information according to the local needs and questions. Every country and mission have their own focus points and typical customer profile. All the localized texts to the web pages need to be created and also translated locally. Due to the international atmosphere and widely spoken English language, the Consulate General in Hong Kong has decided to provide the web site only in compulsory Finnish and Swedish plus English. The natural fourth option would be Cantonese.

2.2 Main communication objectives and topics of the Consulate

The key communication topics the Consulate work with are political, trade and country brand related. Political influencing work related to trade and state relationship is done in more confidential situations and managed mostly by personal relationships in private communications situations. The country brand and image work on the other hand is done by the whole Consulate team and it uses all the channels and work force available.

The other part of the communication the Consulate works with are the general consular services. Consular services are quite static tasks and the information around them is mostly provided and communicated passively in web pages. The local web pages are part of the united network of Foreign Ministry pages and offer the basic information about the services. Consulate provides possibilities to for example apply for a new passport abroad. The service is not actively promoted and there is no goals or targets in this sector. Although it is not measured, I believe this type of service and knowledge about it is crucial part of the Ministry reputation and brand work towards its citizens.

These type of permit services can also be the first contact with “Finland” for people applying residence permit to study or to move to Finland or travel when visa is required. From that perspective and this customer sector considered the services should actually be considered a reputation and brand work of whole Finland.

Consulate could be considered as one of abroad located offices of the Ministry. It is a part of big organization run from Finland. I believe that this scale of organization a state or a Ministry of state represents effects on the communication. It can create an image of quite one-way style communication practices and needs. Even though the purpose of a state is to serve its people the everyday communication tends to be truncated as unidirectional announcement, advisory and guidance type of publications. This is also seen in the communication plans (Appendixes 1-3) as they are drafted topic orientated, focusing key

topics to work on towards somewhat not specified public. All though the plans consist lot of information and provide great scope to decide what themes should be covered, they offer a little help for the process itself or guidance how to plan the process. I believe the communication plans are an outcome of a brain storming session facilitated by highly talented Asia experts and diplomats. The session has been focusing on getting the themes and outlines of the future communication aspects chosen out of the many themes relevant for the Asian hemisphere and to create current, united and consistent topics for the local Missions to refrain and lean on. Unfortunately, the inevitable next steps are not taken or at least the steps and guidance what to do with the information and where are not documented.

3 Research problem and objectives

The research problem, questions, scope and limitations are presented in this chapter. The most relevant research topics are concentrated from the vast communicational tasks of the Consulate. This chapter also opens up why the topic was chosen and why studying it is found relevant and current.

3.1 Research problem

Lack of communication plan and instructions is recognized in the Consulate and a concrete evidence of it are the questions about instructions and guidance rising every time the team experience change of intern or other staff member. I started as a new member of the team to question whether there were any plans or instructions made throughout the years and found some material including brief notes regarding the sources to use to update social media channels used (Facebook and Instagram).

The web of the foreign missions is quite strong and old colleagues around the world collaborate frequently. To consultant a trusted friend working for another mission or the mission in neighboring country is often recommended. That is also the way I considered to be relevant to seek guidance, inspiration and finally comparison material to research the plans of China and Singapore and find out some ideas to support the communication in Hong Kong.

Currently the communication plans don't take into account dialogic aspects or stakeholder needs. These shortages became the basis of research questions and development ideas for the future. Main observations regarding the suggested development areas of the communication planning are:

- Communication is planned as one-way action
- Clear communication channel recommendations are missing
- Planning process of the communication lacks support and guidance
- Focus of the plans is somewhat restricted and only key themes are presented

This thesis suggests an alternative approach to communications planning and offers a perspective by recognizing stakeholders and defining the message content styles that could be used when approaching them. Content and the style of it is always related to the channel used. That is why the main channels are introduced in chapter 7 and suggestions made regarding them.

3.2 Scope and limitations

Versatile spectrum of goals and services the Consulate offers makes it hard to specify a target communication area or function to study. The scope is found by ruling out some of the communication tasks and topics.

Since the crisis communication is well supported and planned in the Ministry level from Finland, there is no acute need to include those type of situations to the communication development studies. Because of the nature of the politics, it is very much personal communication skills-oriented study field. Just as the crisis communication it would deserve a separate Thesis by itself and different theoretical support.

The post-it papers in the figure 1 present the different communicational aspects challenges and tasks the Consulate faces. It also points out the earlier mentioned decisions of leaving out the crisis communication and political influencing. This view could be considered as a starting point for this work but foresee surprisingly quite well some of the outcomes too.

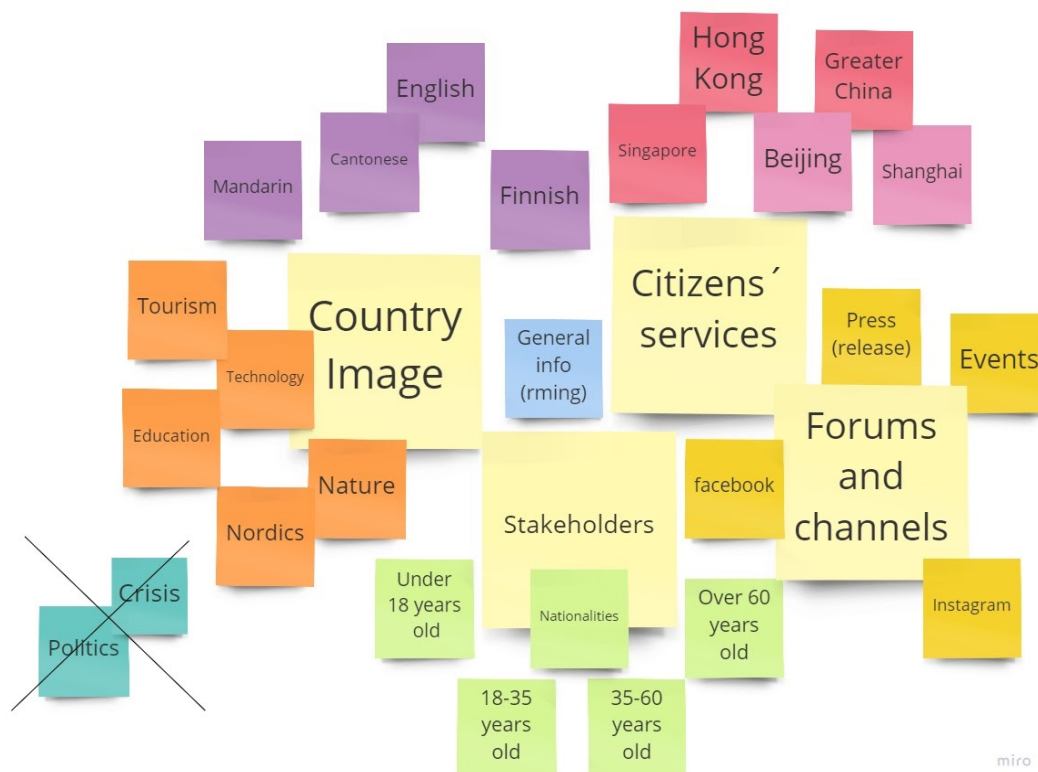


Figure 1. Main communication topics and aspects of the Consulate

3.3 Research questions

Research questions are formed and found from the headlines of the Figure 1. Most important themes are emphasized in there too and the main research topics are naturally formed based on those post-it notes. The research questions asked are:

1. What are the main messages of the communication plans?
2. How to effectively plan communication and measure the outcomes?
3. Who or what are the stakeholders and what type of content should be communicated towards them?
4. What are the communication forums and channels to use in Hong Kong?

Question 1 will be answered by studying the communication plans made by Singaporean, Chinese and Hong Kongese missions. Content of the plans is studied by using content analysis.

Question 2 finds solutions from Elisa Juholin's studies and theories. Those theories are applied into everyday life and some recommendations are made based on the experience of working at the Consulate.

Question 3 will find answers with the help of literature review and adapting theories developed to study marketing, stakeholder and social media communication.

Question 4 is answered by looking into the most popular social media channels in Hong Kong and estimating the potential of them. Also, some other channels used by the Consulate are evaluated.

This thesis does not provide a ready to use communication plan but gives suggestions what to communicate and how to implement the communication. Because of the nature of the social media the channels should be under constant evaluation and monitoring.

3.4 Ladders of successful communication planning

What is the value of the communication? (Juholin 2010, chapter 3) That question is the initiative one when justifying the communication costs but also when planning the communication and acts around it. European Communication Monitor (Juholin 2010, chapter 3) has created steps to evaluate the communication and these steps in the Figure 2 are also effective back bone for planning the resources and acts of communication. In other words, the question “What is the value of the communication” can be seen as the outcome/result of the process or a target.

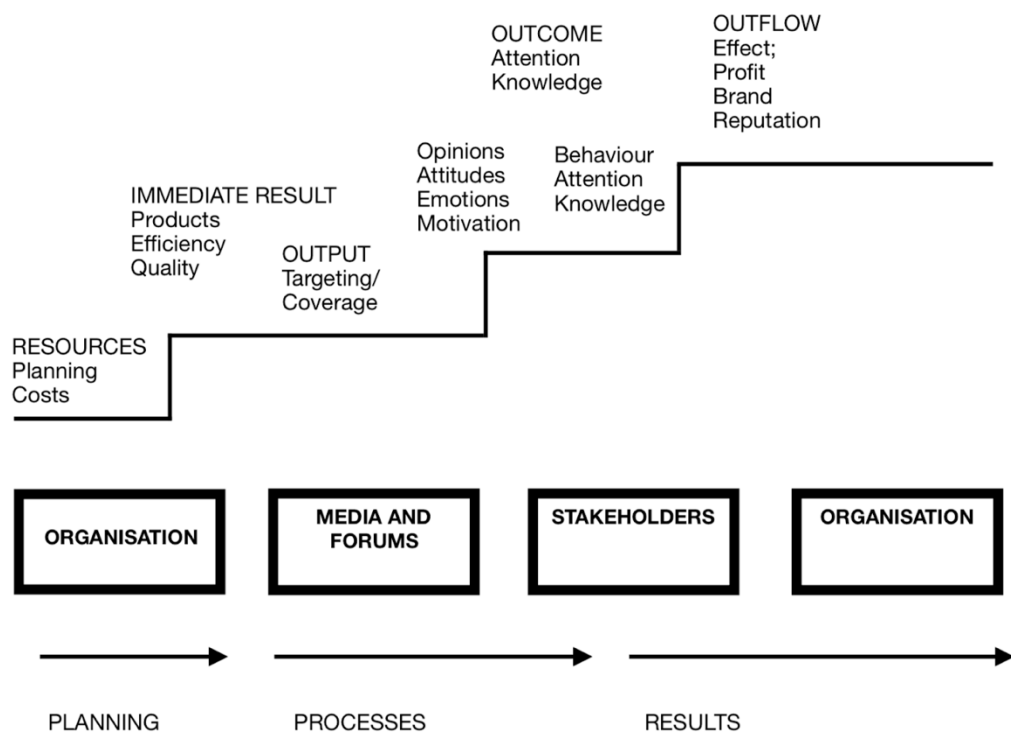


Figure 2. The ladder of evaluating the Communication (adapted from Juholin 2010, chapter 3)

3.4.1 Resources

According to the European Communication Monitor (Juholin 2010, chapter 3) the main question of the input is to scale the communication plan according to the resources. Resources include factors such as people, knowledge and money. Resources are dominating factor in the communication planning stage, since it is crucial to set the goals according to the resources.

That is also the reason for the ladders to start from this question. All the next steps are based on this finding and specification of the costs and workload. If the fundamental step

is estimated wrong, the basis of the communication is not solid and might not correlate with the outcomes or goals.

3.4.2 Output

The immediate effect and reactions of the communication should be measured continuously due to the nature of the communication channels. Most of the messages and campaigns are done wholly or at least partially in social media platforms that need to be updated and modified constantly. This possibility to modify the direction of the message is a big cone but brings lots of work with it. Since the lifespan of a message in social media platforms is very short and consumers consume the material fast, there needs to be constant output evaluation done.

The measured output contains also the process itself and the quality of the communication done depending on the targets set. The quality can be measured by the flawlessness of the material, accuracy and the overall quality of the process. There are also external factors measured such as participants of an event, clicks and traffic on the websites. (Juholin 2010, chapter 3.)

One of the key questions according to Juholin is “Did we deliver the message to the (right) people and was the reaction expected and what was hoped for?”. When it comes to a crisis management the message should emphasis and calls for more seriously action. In these cases, the output question could be: “Did the audience understand the message and did they act accordingly?”. (Juholin 2010, chapter 3.)

One question that should not be forgotten related to the first step of the communication ladders shown in the picture is: “Was the work done according to the resources given and allocated for the communication?” (Juholin 2010, chapter 3). This is also a question that should be ask no matter the situation or message.

3.4.3 Outcome

Direct results of the message sent are seen in the increasing interest towards the advertiser and should correlate in sales if the product is buyable and selling has been the target. The result can also be risen interest toward the cause, and it can be measured by the calls received or donations gained. (Juholin 2010, chapter 3.)

Indirect results are often seen in the attitudes of the public and willingness to act (Juholin 2010, chapter 3). Most of the companies should seek for both. The direct result is usually

the answer for the initial reason to start the communication; there is a product to be sold, or information that requires action or need for attitude change if we think about for example lobbying for a new law. The indirect outcome is then the reputation built on a side of marketing a product. The goal outcomes could be found by for example asking following questions. Did the call for action create positive reaction and image about the company? If the law was passed did the lobbying affect permanently to the attitudes of a crowd and people?

3.4.4 Outflow

Outflow is the outcome of the communication that influence whole organization. The outflow builds also the reputation and brand of the company (Juholin 2010, chapter 3). Marketing, branding and communication are close to each other's and it might depend on the size of the company or corporate culture whether these departments are run by one team or if they all have their own experts. Advertising might be more brand building concentrated, but it helps selling the products too. Just as pure well-done stakeholder communication builds up the brand value besides keeping for example investors involved and informed.

Marketing, communication and branding all work side by side but also as a continuously process. Some outcomes can be evaluated after a campaign or special event. Many of the aspects of the outcomes should be seen as perpetual motion machine or a spin that keeps moving and you may add some speed or guide the direction by the actions or messages.

The communication, marketing or brand building shouldn't be separated from the common goals of the company and they should be done according to the corporate culture and work as corporate culture builders. The communication also reflects the values and decisions of the company and if it used to build up something that is not true or does not reflect the everyday reality of the organization the consequences might be catastrophically. Also, the effort might be useless since the message should be formed from the inside, not made up as a dress for paper doll, since as said by Peter Drucker "culture eats strategies for breakfast" (Campbell, Edgar, & Stonehouse 2011, 263). This means that the marketing or communication strategies will not overcome or change the culture of the company, or at least not by themselves. The existing culture overcomes the external strategies when clashing.

3.5 Stakeholders

Traditionally the idea and word stakeholder mean that companies, person or group - “holders” are having stakes with the “company”. According to Adrio and Waddock (2002, 29) the basic idea can be traced all the way to publication of Bernard made in 1938. The stake refers to an interest that the operator has towards the company.

One of the pioneers in stakeholder studies Freeman divides the stakes into three types (Cornelissen 2014, 44-45):

- Equity stakes; Direct ownership to the organization

Stakeholders are shareholders and directors.

- Economic or market stakes; Economic interests.

Stakeholders are employees, customers, competitors.

- Influencer stakes; No ownership or economic interests.

Stakeholders are organizations or agencies.

All these groups are searching for some kind of profit whether it is money or ideology and the company is producing it or has a control over it. Theories usually emphasize the monetary profit that is accumulated to the company and the stakeholders, but in this context, it is good to remember that the two-way trade also includes ideologies and socio-economical values. The stakeholder groups are never acting independently, and the value is not floating only one way. The stakes of one group are connected to those of others and the interested should be recognized. (Freeman 2010, 27-28.)

The better the trade motives are recognized the better the parties can satisfy their needs and act according to the hopes of the opposite side or trade partner.

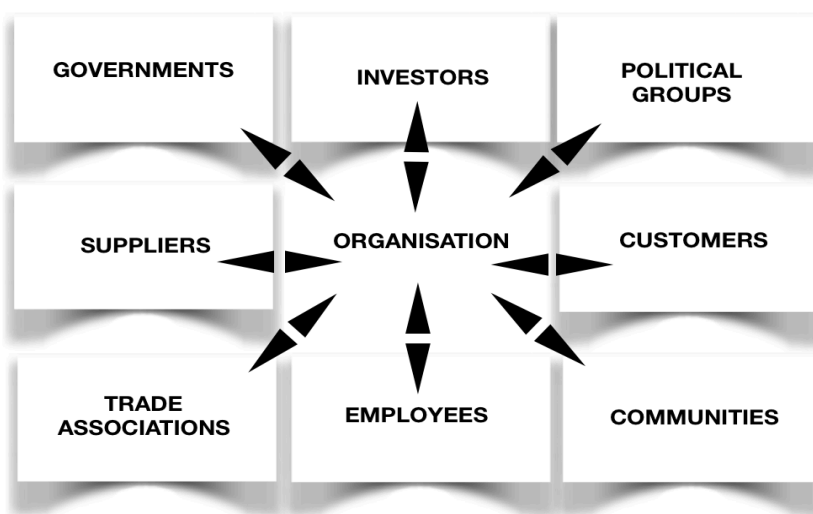


Figure 3. Strategic Management Stakeholder model (adapted Cornelissen 2014, 43)

3.5.1 Stakeholder identification

According to Juholin (2013, 52) stakeholders are needed to the businesses. The cooperation is obvious when it comes to employees, investors, suppliers and customers. But stakeholders can also be unknown for the company and even surprising counterparts when recognized.

First step of stakeholder communication is to identify the stakeholders and label them according to the stake. This information is needed to be able to target the communication content according to the nature of the interest and connection. The main questions for analysis provided by Cornelissen (2017, 46-47) are:

Who are the stakeholders of the organization?

What are their stakes?

What opportunities and challenges relate to these stakeholders?

What are the organization's responsibilities to the stakeholder?

How should the organization communicate with the stakeholders to respond to their stakes and to take into account the challenges and opportunities?

By identifying and labeling the stakeholders the company also achieves tools and valuable information to analyze what the stakeholders already know about the company and what do they think about the services or products of the company and what are the future expectations towards it. (Juholin 2013,115.)

3.5.2 Buyer readiness stages model

In field of marketing studies and theories there is well known idea of Kotler and Armstrong regarding stages the buyer will take before the actual act of buying. I believe these stages might be used also as headlines for the stakeholders and communication made based the readiness stage of the message receiver. This unconventional usage style will be introduced later in implementation part, the original stages of the theory as they were presented by Kotler and Armstrong are presented in this chapter.

The six stages the consumers need to go through are:

1) Awareness. The consumer has a brief idea about the service or product, and it is somehow familiar. The recognition level is so low that general information needs to be provided in a from and via channels that increase the basic consumer awareness. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

2) Knowledge. At this stage the consumer recognizes the product quite strongly but the idea and details about it are still missing. The stage of knowledge and interest to seek for the knowledge needs to be risen. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

3) Liking. The consumer has formed an idea about the product and has a connection to it. The challenge is to follow the general opinion and understand how the consumer feels about the product so that the communication and marketing enhances or guides the opinion to positive direction. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

4) Preference. This is a checkpoint to see if the consumer prefers the product amongst all the competitors. The price point, image and trust toward the product need to be positioned right. The product has to be the top choice in consumers purchase list. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

5) Conviction. This is the final touch of selling process. The consumer needs a strong reason to do the buying decision and choose the specific product over others. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

6) Purchase. The final step is to lead the consumer to the purchase moment. The final push can be an offer, a reward, a contact, or an opportunity to buy by having the product available at the right place at the right time. (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151.)

One of the main stakeholders could be called the consumer target group of the Consulate - the buying customers. Since there is no tangible product that "Consulate the company" sells the ideology, values, customs and land that makes Finland unique are the product. Another product sold are the services that are provided for those who have been born in Finland or granted the nationality.

3.6 PR, marketing or stakeholder communication

How to communicate, when, where and by who? Those questions are the starting points of marketing and marketing communication (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151). In a way the perspective is more sales orientated but when doing effective communication, the outcome can be interpreted as selling the idea if not a physical product.

The communication tasks for the Consulate are versatile as it works for the salesperson of Finland for tourist, education and business sector. The tangible marketing material is clear

and well produced in Finland by different agents such as Foreign Ministry and Business Finland.

Public relationship work is one of the marketing acts but consists also political and influential work that includes press and reporters. Good relationship with local press is crucial. To wake up their interests regarding to Finland the Consulate has for example had a big role organizing a yearly field trip to Finland for few local journalists. This is a major part of keeping them open to Finland, Finnish ideas produced and presented.

Understanding the role of stakeholders and their place almost as customers to Finland is important. The main stakeholders are not the classical suppliers or owners of the businesses. Of course, in the political work there is Ministers and Ministry, even the state that follows the Consulate up and finance the work. But more tangible stakeholders are the local business partners for Finnish companies, Universities, the Finns living or travelling abroad.

3.6.1 Social media and stakeholder communication

As was explained in chapter 3.1, the current communication plans pay very little attention to the channels recommended, specially the social media. However, several studies show that social media provides a great opportunity for organizations to communicate with their stakeholders in digital era. The nature of social media is optimal as it works interactively two-ways and creates communal feeling and communes (Zifei & al. 2017, 1).

One of the key words and KPIs used when talked about social media is engagement. It is also one of the greatest advantages gained by using social media as a communication channel. Engagement means interaction between an organization and the stakeholders or message receivers in general. During this interaction both parties are managing the relationship and building common goals. This interaction creates social capital that benefits both parties. (Zifei & al. 2017, 4.)

Stakeholders think the organizations are more authentic and transparent when the communication in social media messages is engaging the audience. More engaged stakeholders tend to have more positive word-of-mouth and loyalty behavior. (Zifei & al. 2017, 5-6.)

To maximize the engagement the content must be right and targeted for the right audience. The content receivers could be divided to content focus groups. This means also labeling the content. According to Saxton and Waters (2014; Zifei & al 2017, 4) there

are three dimensions that can be used to summarize the content functions used by the organization publishing a social media post:

One-way information content is used to simply share organizational-related information (Zifei & al. 2017, 4).

Promotion and mobilization content give stakeholders better possibility to engage the message and company by participating activities promoted. These promotion and mobilization messages could be event promotions and product marketing. The engagement possibility comes from participating but also from buying the products. (Zifei & al. 2017, 4.)

Dialogue content dimension concentrates creating a dialogue in the online community. This content function category gives the organization a possibility to attract users to be part of the community. Kent, Taylor, & White (2003; Zifei & al. 2017, 4) describe this content “invitational information”.

4 Research process

This part presents history and styles of content analysis method and will also self-explanatory tell why the chosen method to study the communication plan of the Consulates is content analysis. Theoretical part about content analysis concentrates mostly on the work of Harold Lasswell but introduces also later versions and updates from other academics and work groups.

4.1 Research process and methods

The initial idea of this thesis was to write a case study by using the documented communication plans of the somewhat comparable Asian Embassies while working on the communication and making observations of the communication to find out that way ideas and support for the everyday life of the Consulate General in Hong Kong.

It came clear very early on that the communication plans were only drafts and could not offer clear answers for Hong Kong's communicational challenges. To widen the scope, data is collected from observations made while working for the Consulate and discussing freely about the communicational challenges and expectations of the communication with the Consul-General Johanna Karanko and Deputy Consul-General Johanna Manni during fall 2019. More observations are made by following the social media interaction and reactions of the stakeholders in Facebook and Instagram pages of the Consulate during the same period of time.

Case study method is optimal when used for this type of contemporary communicational phenomenon moving constantly to uncontrolled direction. Case study like this answers explanatory questions of "how" and "why" and finds the answers from experiment. The core study methods of case study and this thesis are the possibility to study documents, make observations and do interviews. (Yin 2014, 9-14.)

This Thesis uses qualitative interpretation for often quantitatively used content analysis when seeking information from the communication plans mentioned earlier.

Suggestions for stakeholder recognition are made based on the theories discussed in literature review. Just as the topics of messages posted in social media and recommendation of social media usage in general. The most used social media platforms are presented, and the nature of the channels are explained. The information is gathered by observing social media usage of local Hongkongese and adhesive information found from relevant sources.

4.2 Origin of content analysis

Content analysis is used as a research method to study text but also pictures and video or audio material. It can be very close to quantitative research methods if the text is seen as a code that is driven through a program as data to search similarities or patterns. Content analysis might also be used as a method to analyze the real meaning of the content source, in this case the text. (Macnamara 2005, 3.)

One of the usages of content analysis is media content analysis. This need of analysis methods was born with the rise of mass media. During the 1920's first systematic and widespread propaganda was distributed and used as one of the weapons of World War I. The second big wave of the propaganda and analysis usage come later early 1940's during the World War II. The pioneer of the study is the American sociologist and psychologist Harold Lasswell who summarized content analysis to few questions:

"The stream of communication is made up of statements, and the key questions to ask about any statement are: What is said? Who says it? Who is affected, how? Symbol analysis [content analysis] is concerned with 'What is said'" (Lasswell & al. 1942, 12).

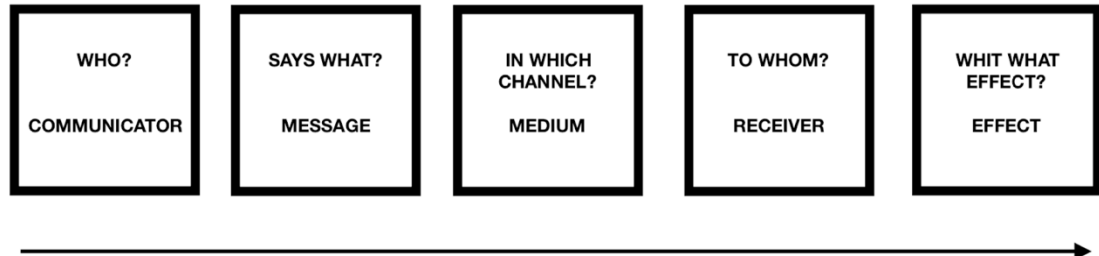


Figure 4. Stream of communication statements (adapted from Communication Theory by Lasswell 1948, 117)

Lasswell's (1948, 117) main perspective was to count the frequencies. He and his associates Lerner and de Sola Pool stated that: "There is clearly no reason for content analysis unless the question one wants answered is quantitative." That quantitative approach was the dominant study line throughout the (war) years of 1930's and 1940's (Franzosi 2011, 11).

Besides the strict quantitative interpretation, (media) content analysis can also be studied from the behaviorist and humanist tradition perspective as Shoemaker and Reese did (Macnamara 2005, 3).

4.2.1 Behaviorists and Social scientists

Behaviorists are considering the content; tv, literature, movies, and texts as starting point for something cultural. They are looking for a reaction born by the content and in a way the content might create the future. Content could be seen as a prediction of the future (Macnamara 2005, 3). This interpretation and study line see the content as a creator and starting point of a phenomenon. To close the circle, one could say that this gives a credit for the original idea of propaganda by admitting and studying the impact of the content.

4.2.2 Humanists and Cultural Anthropology

The humanist approach looks to the other direction. This approach looks backwards from the content to see what the media mirrors from the culture and events that already happened. The core of the perspective is to analyze the culture and society producing the content from itself and subconsciously revealing the truth about the state of the society.

These two ways of studying are not denying each other's but create a classical dilemma of what comes or is created first. Will the culture and society be created based on the media and content or will it reflect something that is already there and is just brought up to this format of media? This perspective difference and problem created by the angle is also pointed out by Macnamara using "Chicken or the Egg" metaphor:

"This dual view is "the Chicken or the Egg" type of dilemma of the media content analysis. "Whether mass media create public opinion, attitudes and perceptions(effects) or reflect existing attitudes, perceptions and culture." (Macnamara 2005, 3).

5 Research findings and implementation

This part will assemble and use the theoretical models presented in chapter 5 and frames to analyze the data of the other Asian missions and recognize the stakeholders. This will be the ground for the last part which will put the theory and study together and form ideas and guidelines how to create and develop the communication of the Consulate General of Finland in Hong Kong and Macao.

5.1 Content analysis of the communication plans

Since content analysis is often used to study media and culture projected by it, and also the culture the media is trying to influence, the documents and subject are quite fruitful. Even though in this case the original material is few worded and produced by using a simple table the content is basically marketing and media plan of Finland towards China/ Asia. These plans are made to guide diplomacy and foreign relationships.

During a war time vocabulary usually changes to call the messages and plans as propaganda. As explained earlier on chapter 5.2 this is the origin of the study method used. In a way it would not be wrong to note that this research done for the thesis is not very far away from the original purposes of the content analysis.

The first impression and message of these communication plans presented as Appendixes 1 to 3 is very complicated. It is slightly hard to try to justify Hong Kong and Singapore to be on the same level and competing about the title of the trade hub of the Asia just by reading the plans. For political, historical and geographical reasons Hong Kong is part of China and labeled under that superpower. Because of that some of the communicational messages and key point of Hong Kong are buried under Mainland-China's very fundamental key problems Finland wants to delicately influence.

The main messages, target groups and metrics of the communication plans (see Appendixes 1-3) are gathered to the following table. The table brings up the differences and readiness stages of the communication plans. It is also an effective starting point to improve the Hong Kong's communication plan by picking up the most relevant observations for their use. As the table shows, key elements of the communication and communication plans are headlines of messages. Some target groups are presented but the content of messages is not paired especially well with any target groups. Metrics used to measure the success or goals of the communication do not indicate any dialogue or feedback to be expected. Overall the summaries are brief, and topic orientated. The impact or metrics are less considered.

Table 1. Summary of key content of the plans of China, Hong Kong and Singapore

	China	Hong Kong	Singapore
message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -business environment info for Finnish companies -human rights and democracy -Global stability -Finland part of international trade -climate change -promote international regulations and standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -do business with Finland -visit Finland -Hong Kong, gate to Asia (business) is it still valid? 	<p>Towards Finns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -travel destination marketing -Singapore, gate to Asia (business) -easy access; language, highly educated, low cost to start a business -generous investments from government (allowances) <p>Towards Singaporeans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -stable, clean and safe country -health care & digital products -attract investors to Finland -innovation cooperation -increase awareness of Finland -visa free, straight flights
target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finnish companies and politics -schools -Finnish media -Finnish citizens in China and Finland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -HK Media -locals -locals who have visited Finland (Finland alumni) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finnish research institutes -Finns living and travelling in Singapore -Singaporean businesses -healthcare providers -specific universities and stakeholders of targeted sectors -international Singaporeans
metrics of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Export metrics -Media exposure counting -General knowledge increase 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of companies -Volume of businesses -Number of joint ventures -Number of exchange students (both ways) -Number of travelers (both ways)

For these types of short materials such the Communication plans analyzed it is very easy to conduct word counting and use the original style of the content analysis simply by doing a word search from a word document.

Foreign Ministry instructs two web pages to be the most important tools for branding Finland. These pages are “thisisFINLAND” and “Finland toolbox”. The main words counted and compared in quantitative word analysis in the following table are picked from those pages.

Already the main headlines of the web pages are emphasizing the topics that the Foreign Ministry wants to point out. Those headlines offer very justified and good word source for the quantitative research made based on the communication plans. The language and message of those two web pages are also quite coherent and the key words of the messages are easy to pick. Both of the pages are built around the following words.

The main topics and words used in the research are: Business, Innovation, Design, Education, Wellbeing. The words chosen are also topics that have been empirically noted to be the key elements in this year’s publications and studies the Ministry has especially decided to distribute and that are recognizes globally. These studies that have made headlines yearly and globally are World Happiness report and the Pisa study which has branded Finnish education system for a long time already.

Table 2. Word frequency in the plans of China, Hong Kong and Singapore

word	times mentioned in China strategy	times mentioned in Hong Kong strategy	times mentioned in Singapore strategy
business	3	0	1
innovation	1 (innovative)	0	4
design	4	1	0
education	2	7	2
wellbeing	0	0	0

Hong Kong strategy is written in Finnish, but the word design is found from the text once. Word “education” is searched and translated “koulutus”.

5.1.1 Content analysis results

Just by reading the communication plans and highlighting the main points the Singapore's version seems to be most comprehensive and well structured. It is divided to the communication towards local Singaporeans and Finns. It also takes into the consideration everyday aid and impact of the Consulate towards the Finns traveling into the country and possibly interested coming there. The target groups and metrics are also overall most advanced in the Singapore plan.

The Chinese plan is concentrated on big picture, but as an Embassy of such a small and diplomatic county as Finland the Embassy's possibilities to effect on for example the climate change in China or even the attitudes or culture in there are quite limited. But it is good to remember that the Embassy is part of the Foreign Ministry and it should absolutely back up the political interests, concerns and attitudes Finland has towards China.

It is quite progressive and bold in a way to write and list climate change as a topic to the Chinas agenda. Just to compare to the Hong Kong's plan there is not a word about the situation in Hong Kong: The tight hold of China is not something locals are willing to digest, and big protest have been seen against the central government proposals to control the city. Also, the international community has disagreed the latest development that has been seen for example as a deportation of an international journalist and disappearance of a local but Swedish national critically thinking bookstore keeper.

The question is, weather Finland has a political interests, concerns or attitudes when it comes to Hong Kong or is the politics of the area too compromising even compared to the quite open listing of the communication agenda towards the Mainland China?

The overall image and firsthand feeling of the plans changes when the words are counted and analyzed. That change in ranking of the plans when it comes to the readiness and success stage was not expected. The content appears to be most well done in Singapore but just by counting the keywords even the somewhat short draft of Hong Kong gets most hits.

Keywords in total are mentioned following times: Singapore 7 hits, Hong Kong 8 and China 10. The explanation for wellbeing lacking from all the reports must be because the topic has risen on the communication and on the web pages by the UN World Happiness report launched on March 2019 (UN World Happiness report, 2019). The plans are

probably done before that. Finland has been one of the happiest places for some time already, but the win has quite obviously been seen as a valuable communication point and emphasizes on the pages more strongly ever since.

5.1.2 Key learning points of the content

The chart table and basis for the communication plan provided by Foreign Ministry is quite simple but comprehensive. It is not updated according to the modern presentation standards, but it works well as a tool to gather the ideas and gives guidelines for the Embassies and Consulates how to approach and draft the topics of the messages for a communication plan. Just as mentioned already earlier the plan does not give any guidelines how to use the topic chosen. Suggestion for improving the act of communication, channels, stakeholders and planning of the communication are given in next chapters.

For the future the Singapore plan divided in two and concerning more specific target groups would be something to consider. It helps the communication to be more specific and targeted better and might also help out choosing the language used.

The wellbeing topic should be studied since it is one of the key elements on the Ministry communication channels. Quite surely it will be mentioned in 2020 plans globally since the recognition is so comprehensive and easy to use and it has been emphasized so strongly in the mentioned Ministry channels.

Education plays such a big role in Asian cultures that the Hong Kong plan should be studied and scaled to all of the Asian countries. Branding and communicating the Finnish values and education systems would be something the Consulates and Embassies could effect on. Communication with the local stakeholders and governments is specifically the right type of work the Consuls and Ambassadors might be able to deliver.

Global issues mentioned such as climate change should not be forgotten but the actual work should be left for example bigger events such as state visits. Living as preaching or leading by example is one of the best models I believe could be used for the bigger challenges. I think globally the biggest impact will be done by joining the treaties and cutting the consumption in Finland. The promotional work made in local offices might not be the best way to use the limited resources of the Missions.

5.2 Aspect and structure for successful planning

Many years ago, I heard about an African tribe that has a very unique perspective to time - future and past. They don't walk to the future facing it as Western culture sees the concept of time. They walk to the future backwards, facing the past. The idea of past and future are the same but since there is nothing to see in the future because we cannot know what happens or is waiting for us, it makes no sense to stare at it. Instead they see the past and look towards what they can see, the path they have already walked. Step by step the view changes and widens.

This idea has always fascinated me, since the only actual view we have is the landscape of past. Of course, we are heading forward and the art of future interpretation is highly appreciated skill, and much needed in many fields of businesses. But can we rely our estimates about the future to anything else than the past we have already experienced? Maybe not. We make patterns of behavior and analyze the trends based on data collected from the events and years that are already in the past and experienced.

My suggestion is to use the information and tools there is and plan the future communication by following the ladders of Elisa Juholin and ECM presented in chapter 4 but walk them backwards, nose to the past while moving to the future. This is something Juholin also suggests in her book, but I wish to emphasize the idea and ideology. The next chapters of this paper show how the communication of the Consulate General of Finland in Hong Kong and Macao could be planned by using the theoretical models of Juholin and what kind of questions will the process rise. The plan is not a completed guidebook, but a theoretical skeleton to fill up by the concrete actions and decisions that can be chosen by the team doing the communication.

5.2.1 Results - the starting point of planning

To follow the Communication ladders of Juholin and EMC (Figure 2) the starting point of the communication journey should be the outflow of communication. The main concern should be the brand Finland but also the reputation and brand of the Consulate General of Finland in Hong Kong and Macao. How is the Consulate seen from the perspective of the stakeholders and what does it want to represent and emphasis in Hong Kong and Macao?

These actions and values should come from the heart, in this case all the way from the Government program and behavior of the Government towards its 'employees and other nations but also from the values and behavior of the Consulate employees.

The brand radiates the image to its' customers if the actions are sincere. The Consulate can represent Finland only if it is part of Finland itself. The working environment needs to be equal, friendly, clean, respectful and rise an interest from the inside of the safety doors of the Consulate and shine all the way to the customers and stakeholders.

Putting on a "Finland face" when stepping out is not enough. I believe that "the journey is the goal". The steps taken and messages sent while getting towards to the goal might be more important than the actual immediate outcome when building a brand. For the Consulate this would mean to put special attention to the work and communication made before the actual event. The beautiful outcome will not justify the not well controlled acts and communication. But contrary the well-done communication on the way forgives the possible not pursued or slightly damaged outcome.

For customers visiting the Consulate topics of the visits are often related to big questions such as births deaths and nationalities. The outcome of a process is not always positive and not even dependent or related to the work of the Consulate, but the Consulate is often the only communication channel and point for the customer. In this post the content and delivery style of a message is more than important, and the situation may be saved with accurate, respectful and friendly customer service and well done informing beforehand.

5.2.2 Outcome - The success stories of the budget and action plan

Eventually it all comes down to the money. One of the few compulsory plans with very strict deadlines the Consulate is obligated to do yearly is the budget. The budget requires planning of actions, events and country brand themes and is followed throughout the year. The budget serves the best available plan of marketing and communication of the Consulate and should be taken into consideration as a serious planning tool. The budget is also updated and modified during the year regarding to changes in the local events.

The outcomes that are direct results of the actions could be quite well measured when paired with the budget plan. Maybe calculating the return of investment is too much to ask for but the outcomes of the communication during the year would be easier to see when scaled and measured event by event. The budget also gives an impression of the importance of the events by giving it a monetary value. It shows easily what are the main focus points and topics of the year.

By the end of the year it is easy to compare the used money to the original plan discuss why something was done besides not budgeted preliminary and why something budgeted might not have had such a strong emphasis. The tangible money aspect also gives an

easier starting point for the conversation of the success of an event. Was it worth of the money? Did the communication support the nature of the event? Was it communicated as much and widely as it was emphasized budget wise? Should some of the money be allocated to the communication and marketing usage? How much time should be used to something that takes certain amount of the budget?

5.2.3 Output - the everyday feedback of the actions

The immediate and daily monitoring and evaluating of the communication is following the weak signals the Consulate gets from social media platforms, phone calls and emails. Because these messages are spread to different people working for the Consulate according to the topic and regarding to the sender and platform it would be very beneficial to create a time, space and atmosphere to share the latest news in weekly bases.

The calls are answered only by one or two Cantonese speaking persons and the questions and concerns of the callers are only shared and forwarded when there is some specific action needed by authorized person in the Consulate. The question or enquiry trends and even the amount of the phone calls remain unknown. Going through the topics weekly would be very beneficial for the whole team. It would work as a teaching and reviewing method but also as an initial action point to improve communication of certain repeating topics.

The emails regarding changes in legislation or practices are always in Finnish and not forwarded to the non-Finnish speaking staff. This leaves easily a gap to their knowledge and they are often the initial and final contact point of the customers reaching the Consulate.

Facebook is often followed only by the intern who spends three to six months in Hong Kong and the output of the posts are not necessarily monitored and possible comments not answered or reacted. Social media platforms are one of the best platforms giving information of the performance and that data should be used and followed. The data from social media is not the whole truth but it gives quite good feedback of the topics that are found to be interesting by the followers and what have might cause some conversation.

The Consulate has its own web pages under the Foreign Ministry hosted platform and there is a possibility to modify the pages and for example the social media platforms used (Facebook and Instagram) are shown on the pages. There is also a possibility to update and personalizes the info in landing page.

The data regarding the visitors is not given to the Consulate and it cannot be monitored. This information could be useful to see. The information regarding what questions and topics have been looked for could create heat spots. Those most searched topics could be moved to the front page or otherwise lifted in the communication.

This type of actions should release pressure to contact the Consulate in person by easing the reachability of the information. This could release some time of the personnel for other tasks. On the other hand, it might bring some more responsibilities for the missions in general to follow the data and update the pages. Regardless who has the access to the data it should be shared, and the info used to develop the pages and services and communication of the Consulate.

5.2.4 Resources

According to the European Communication Monitor (Juholin 2010, chapter 3) the main question of the input is to scale the communication plan according to the resources. Resources include factors such as people, knowledge and money. But when using this earlier explained method of driving reverse gear, the biggest mental work needs to be done by changing the perspective. In this case the main question would be scaling the resources according to the communication plan. This does not mean that the resources are stretched to impossible but more like dividing and scaling the resources percentual. By doing that the goals chosen while doing the budget are stable and the workload allocated to everyone is the variable.

Of course, it should be remembered that a small team such as the Consulate, formed of five to seven people cannot perform as a professional communication team even though the goals would be set to that level. This does not mean that the resources are stretched to impossible, but it asks for dividing and scaling everything regarding to the workload planned for the year.

The question Juholin presents (2010, chapter 3) "Was the work done according to the resources given and allocated for the communication?" should be in this case asked: Was the workload allocated right according to the importance of the communication action or event? In other words, was there enough emphasis given for the event and workforce hired and allocated to work for it compared to the importance of it?

5.3 Stakeholders and target groups

Elisa Juholin pares new and old communication practices and terms in her book “Arvioi ja paranna!: viestinnän mittaamisen opas”, (Juholin 2010, chapter 8) and places target groups as an old version of stakeholders, persons and parties. But for as wide audience as Finland might have in Hong Kong it is important to recognize the stakeholders such as other missions and government level agents, but also the target groups amongst all Hongkongese. This is a fundamental question that determines many aspects of the communication starting from the language used; Finnish, Mandarin, Cantonese, English.

To answer the initiative questions of Cornelissen I analyzed the empirical knowledge and info I have picked up from working at the Consulate and also consulted my colleagues the Consul-General and Deputy Consul-General during weekly meetings and in non-structured interview type of situations when the communication improvements and targets have been negotiated. The outcome includes plenty of so-called silence information the local workers provide to the mission and the experienced diplomats bring along with them from other countries, missions and posts they have been working for previous years. For this part the stakeholders mentioned in the communication plans of the other Asian missions are also noticed.

As mentioned in the pre words of this paper the political work is excluded from the studies. That leaves the government and foreign politics such as trade and human right questions out of the process, just to narrow down and clarify the topic.

5.3.1 Opportunities and challenges of stakeholders

Just as Cornelissen presents (2017, 46-47) the stakeholders bring opportunities but also challenges. The organization is in a way responsible to communicate to the stakeholders even if the stakeholders are not owners or legislatively bounded to the business. In the Consulate situation the organization has mandatory duties to inform and serve Finnish people and also serve the foreigners applying to travel or move to Finland even if they are outside from the preferred and governmental target groups.

One of the biggest country image decisions in my opinion is to choose to serve everybody respectfully and equally. I would wish the Finnish missions to stand out as a spoke-points of the developed and recognized Nordic values of zero discrimination, transparent decision making, reliable law and justice and equal opportunities. This creates opportunities to stand out but also a big responsibility to meet everybody from the

Pakistani cooks to Macanese real estate sharks equally and communicate and serve them in a level that gives them opportunity and good image of Finland.

This working and communication method and attitude is also recognized and supported widely but it does not tend to live in the plans, discussions and decision making. Even the earliest (and in the beginning controversial response received) first country branding project in Finland "Mission for Finland" chose that branding path: The best way is to change the reality (HS 2020).

The missions have the idea and responsibility to promote the Finnish businesses towards the local organizations but in a way, they are not expected to highlight anybody or favoring anyone. The solution to do effective work without lifting up individuals or specific companies is to try to connect businesses in local and personal level and open up the governmental doors and contacts throughout the diplomatic connections. But publicly the communication needs to be quite general. The Consulate may not advertise any companies, but only tell the stories about what is going on and what has happened.

5.3.2 Stakeholder by nationality and language

I believe the stakeholders can first of all be divided into foreign citizens and Finns as well as individuals and businesses. The great division to foreign and Finnish people is needed to clarify the basic problem of communication language. To divide the stakeholders as foreigners and Finns do not give straight solution but gives a starting point for the recognition work.

The Consulate serves Finnish abroad, but not all the citizens speak Finnish. Specially in Hong Kong and China there is a small but strong present of people who have gained and chosen their nationality to be Finnish after working several years for technology companies such as Nokia in Finland and abroad. They may have been able to speak and read Finnish at the time of gaining and choosing the new nationality, but the skill is often forgotten.

There is also group of spouses and children of Finns who them self might also Finns but may have lived mostly abroad and maybe just visited the relatives or participated the military service.

Brexit has also brought up few cases especially due to the strong connection and geological closeness Hong Kong has towards Australia. There are some descendants of Finns who were born in Australia and have English citizenships maybe along Australian

and they are now seeking towards Finland to keep the Europe open option. This can be seen specially because of the unrests in Hong Kong and Brexit plans of Great Britain. We are only speaking of few exceptions, but those few people with a different background form the small group of non-Finnish speaking stakeholders who would automatically assume by nationality to be able to understand and receive Finnish communication.

The foreign language used alongside Finnish would presumably be Cantonese or Chinese. But the international atmosphere of Hong Kong gives possibility to rely on other options too. The statistics tell that the city has close to 200 000 Philippine inhabitants who are mostly domestic helpers. They make about 4% of the population. Many people in general speak fluent or quite good English, but Cantonese is the most used language in the city (88,9%). English as another official language covers officially only 4,3% and other dialects of Chinese such as Mandarin 3,1% (World population review, 2019).

To be able to serve non-Finnish speaking stakeholders the language chosen based on statistics should be Cantonese. This nevertheless leaves out one more group of people not speaking Cantonese; all the non-Hongkongese. Cantonese is not widely spoken or studied amongst the other nationalities and even the Mandarin speakers would struggle communicating and reading the language. The easiest and most obvious decision for the Consulate is to use English besides Finnish and Swedish.

5.3.3 Individuals, Companies and Governmental organizations

The language question is relevant regarding all the other stakeholder groups as well. The Consulate works as a hotspot of people and companies trying to come and go to Finland and Hong Kong/ Macao. The same thinking can be used for individual travelers and movers and for the trading of ideas of the NGOs.

Individuals are mostly travelling to Finland and seeking for information regarding to the holiday destination decision and for example visa requirements related to the holidays. Other group of individuals is coming to Finland in general for over 90 days which is the maximum tourist visa limit. They are moving to study or work. Towards those individuals there is a great demand of country image work.

Finland is interested in growing tourist sector and develop Helsinki-Vantaa as a layover hub to Europe. Finland is also seeking for foreign workers. There is a demand of seasonal workers who are valuable asset for farming especially in Pohjanmaa area and winter tourism in Lapland. Regarding to Ministry of the Interior there is about 13 000 - 15 000 seasonal workers in Finland yearly (Ministry of the Interior 2019).

Hong Kong, Macao and in this case the unofficial representation of Taiwan are potential areas for young students to experience the exotic Finland and work in Lapland during the winter season. The local habit is to study bachelor's degree and then work for few years and save money for master's studies. During that time the global minded and young people would be a valuable asset to the skiing centers and winter locations of Northern Finland to serve the demand of English and Chinese speaking customers.

Because of high valued education and lack of major agricultural sector in the area, Hong Kong or Macao are not potential sources for the farming and berry picking seasonal workers. The immigration interests and demand regard mostly talented and highly educated workforce speaking several languages, especially Chinese and excellent English.

5.3.4 Talent boost

The competition of talented workforce is global, and the Finnish Government has also written a publication called "Töihin Suomeen - Hallituksen maahanmuuttopoliittinen ohjelma työperusteisen maahanmuuton vahvistamiseksi" which enhances the idea of improve the age dependency ratio, economy and internationality of Finland by labor immigration (Finnish Government 2018, 9). At the same time the council of state prepared published a program called talent Boost - Kasvua kansainvälisistä osaajista (MEAE Talent Boost 2019). The need of workforce is recognized, and it is spread widely amongst different sectors.

The well-known sectors lacking workers are social, health care and construction. According to the Finnish Government (2018, 18) publication there will be need of 15 000 workers for programming and coding businesses by year 2020. The figure below shows the steps the government and cities are taking to fill that need. The figure also describes the place the Consulate has in this program.

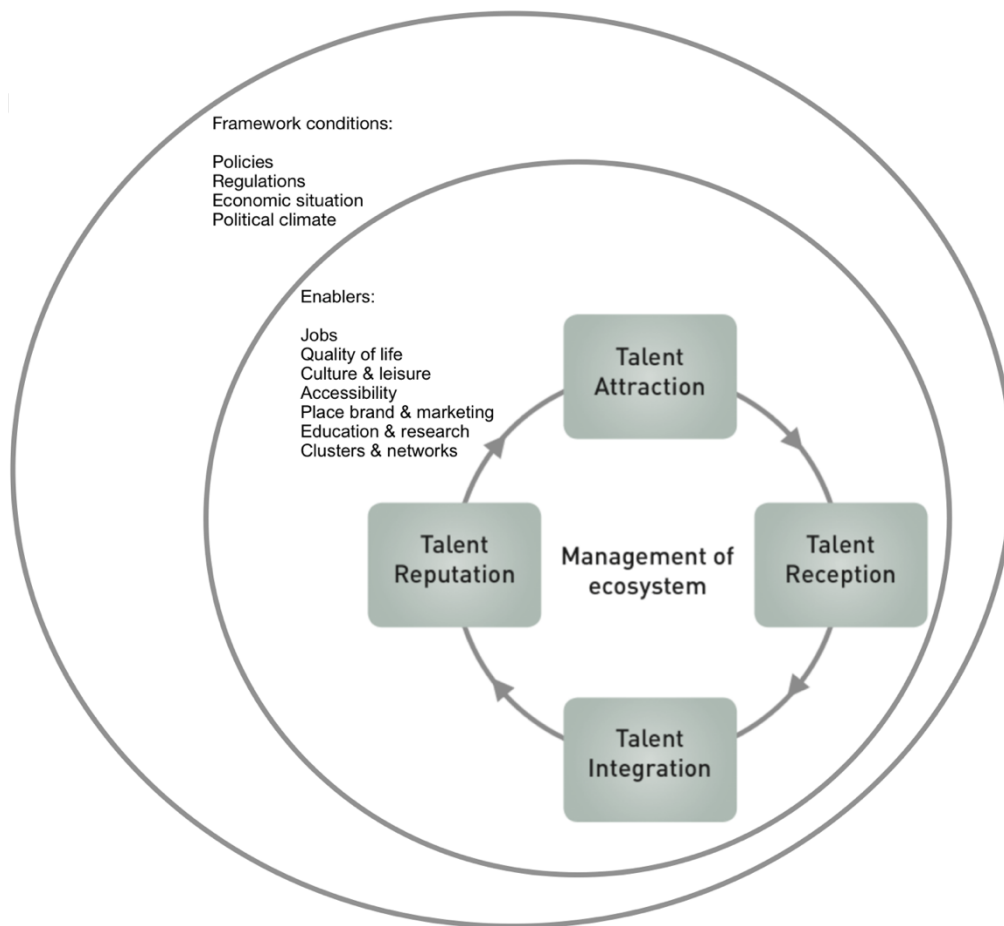


Figure 5. Talent boost steps for foreign employee attraction (adapted from Future Leadership Places, Kotka 2018)

The Consulate has some influence on the outermost circle when it comes to policies and regulations as an influencer and expert consultant for Foreign Ministry. There is also communicational work that the Consulate can do to create the image of Accessibility, Networks, Marketing and Creating Clusters. And of course, Finland as a place benefits the brand and marketing work the Consulate makes constantly.

The very concrete steps the Consulate can do is to make sure that the message of this state of willingness reaches the local talents and improve the knowledge by for example informing about the latest legislative changes and open possibilities such as a residence permit for start-up businesses and the residence permit possibility to researchers and students graduating from Finland to apply residence permit for two years to seek for a job or start a business.

5.3.5 Talent boost and education

The talent boost program is cooperating with the education sector which in Finland is government run but it might in Asia be also private operated. Finland in year 2017 had average OECD country percentage of higher education students from abroad (7,1%) (MEAE Talent Boost 2019). In a way it is good to hear that Finland can reach to the average even though the country is relatively small and unknown compared to many other OECD countries and the language is also not mainstream. But the well-known level of education and cheap price tag of studies could rise Finland higher.

One of the key points of the Talent Boost is to make students choose to come to Finland but also to make them stay after studies. In year 2018 over 4900 degrees were completed by foreigners from which 500 were Doctoral (MEAE Talent Boost 2019).

There is also a major possibility for education export from Finland to Hong Kong. The Hongkongese education institutes are bringing up of the best pupils and the atmosphere is in general very competitive and typical to Asian cultures. The younger generation Y and even the latest Z (born after mid '90s) were born into wealthier lifestyle and more international atmosphere. They are slowly seeking for alternative professions and styles to study and their decision are also slowly accepted by the parents. In other words, it is slowly getting culturally proper to seek for other career options besides the traditionally high earning lawyers, bankers, doctors and so on.

The image of the education system in Finland is somewhat controversial in Hong Kong. I believe this applies to many of the Northern European education institutes too where the studying methods are somewhat softer or at least encouraging for more independent and freer pace in studies. On the other hand, well-respected researches are telling that the Finnish education system is one of the best in the world.

As an example of the situation a Facebook post made by the Consulate related to studying in Finland was reposted by a local person working for the education sector with forewords "students, if you like to have a break in your studies go to Finland for exchange". It is hard to say if this gives necessarily a positive picture about the quality of the University studies in Finland. Specially for the demanding and paying parents. But on the other hand, there must be clear differences between the studying and teaching cultures between the countries, otherwise the systems would be ranked equally.

5.3.6 Corporate co-operation

The key elements of marketing Finnish businesses were risen in the content analysis of all three Asian countries communication plans especially the Singapore's. The main target to bring business opportunities towards Finland is by importing intelligence or exporting goods or ideas. That type of perspective towards the import/export will create business for Finland and Finnish companies.

From those elements mentioned the Consulate would have best tools and resources to promote the Finnish values and business opportunities. Somewhat naturally existing role would also be connecting Finnish businesses with local buyers or cooperation partners.

Because of the resources of the Consulate are very limited cooperation with the local companies and organizations is the way to success and reach bigger goals. There are few big companies operating in Hong Kong and gaining from the country image work as much as the Consulate.

Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (Finncham) is an established partner for the Consulate when it comes to organizing events such as seminars, Christmas markets, and launching Finnish products. In Hong Kong the Finncham is the organizer of the Independence Day event when quite often it is something the mission does. The cooperation is essential for both and the event production orientated interns Finncham has are a valuable work force for the Consulate when united and working together for bigger goals. The credibility and governmental level relationships the Consulate can offers raise the profile of the events and the Chamber of Commerce.

Finnair could also be listed as a partner, since quite often they participate the same events. Increasing interest about Finland is naturally their objective too.

5.3.7 Stakeholder categorization by age groups

According to the report made by Finland promotional Board in 2017 the country image is formed during the teenager years and is very hard to change after those years. The image might be affected when visiting the country or getting friend from the country but otherwise the initial image stays very strongly in people's minds.

This raises immediate thought of targeting 15 to 20 years old people when doing the Country image work and communication. This age group could be reached via social media that has found to be one of the most effective communication channels. But the

same age group is also the fastest moving trend setter in the constantly evolving world of apps and platforms used online.

Most of the world leaders and parents of the teenagers are 45 to 60-year-old. That means that the country image might in average be from the '80s. The biggest individual factors forming the country image are also from that period of time; late '80s and '90s when the Soviet Union collapsed, Finland become a member of EU and Nokia occupied the cellphone markets (Finland promotion board 2017, 6-10). One could hope that something has happened ever since and Finland is not the same place anymore, but the image abroad might still be from that period.

Over all the strengths and well-known abilities Finland has are education, technology and Lapland (travel destination). Since travel industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in Finland, I believe it needs special attention in the country image work besides the education export and promotion of start-up friendly environment and high-tech. Also, the numbers are justifying this. Tourism revenue is nearly four billion euros per year. That is more than high tech export in total. Tourism is also fast-growing industry. In average it grows about 4 % yearly but in Nordics the growth is 6%. The growth comes mainly with the visitors from Germany, UK, USA, China and Japan. (Finland promotion board 2017, 11-12.)

There is a big traveling boom going on in Asia as the living standards are getting better and middle class wealthier. It is easy to see that Northern Europe raises special interest amongst the Chinese and Hong Kongese passengers but just as the Finland Promotion board (2017, 12) estimates Finland has no special place amongst the Nordic Countries but it benefits the flow of the area. In general, the individual Nordic Countries are not well known in Hong Kong and are often referred as "Nordics". But the Nordics have a very good and interesting reputation because of Northern Lights, volcanic spas in Iceland and pure nature.

5.4 Buyer readiness stage recognition

As was explained in chapter 4.2.2, regarding to Kotler & Armstrong (2015, 151) the consumers walk through six stages before buying the product. The customers of Consulate and Finland in this case could be stakeholders renewing a passport. Or the buying action would be considered as a decision to travel to Finland during next holiday or choosing Finland as an exchange study destination. One of the core communications challenges Consulate has is to recognize these need stages of the consumers and provide the sufficient information and services accordingly.

Even though the products that the Consulate offer are not tangible, and the model is made for marketing purposes it has been used for this study. I have taken the liberty to apply the original model as a stakeholder recognition tool. In this chapter the model is used to identify customers on different buyer readiness staged but the outcome has been interpreted as different stakeholder groups instead of dividing one of the stakeholders - customers - to different sub-stages.

5.4.1 Stage Six, Purchase - Finnish citizens living in the area

As an example of the stage six customer communication needs, I could present the every few years happening event in Finland; the elections. The Consulate organizes a possibility to vote for Parliamentary, Presidential, Municipal and EU elections. In general, all Finns of legal age have a right to vote in all elections. Some restrictions apply regarding Municipal and EU elections and the right to vote is depending on the place the person has chosen to live officially.

The possibility to vote abroad is open for every Finn from tourists to people living in the city. The Consulates are globally open for the voters during the same dates. These few days are determined from Finland beforehand and are before the official election day but sometimes partly simultaneously or before the pre-elections.

Even though the dates are chosen and announced by the Finnish governmental authorities and some of the Finnish people living in the area are personally known by the Consulate workers, the moment to vote seems to surprise several people every time. The Consulate also receives some questions regarding to the elections in regular bases even if it informs the dates and times by using all the possible channels (web sites, Facebook, Consulate premises).

This example is in my opinion an excellent example of stage six consumer readiness stakeholders. The local Finns are well aware of the Finland and how the country works, and knowledge of the elections reaches them quite surely.

From my own experience the feeling and emotional awareness of nationality enhances abroad. There is usually no competition of elections. Still the election percentage amongst the Finns living abroad is only around 10 to 15%, when in Finland the election percentage is often over 70% (Statistics Finland 2019).

In a place such as Hong Kong and Macao where there is estimated to be 200-250 Finnish citizens living and studying the communication of the Consulate is a key matter. My personal estimate is that about 10 people out of around 230 misses the elections because of not finding out early enough the polling station opening hours. Other 10 do not vote because of not knowing of the election opportunity while living abroad and maybe 10 more travelers would be in town during the elections and would be able to vote but don't understand to do it while visiting and will miss the pre-elections and the actual election date because of other trips. In total this form around 10 percentage of the potential voters and by voting they would rise the voting volume around 20% in Hong Kong. The Presidential elections usually get 100-150 votes from Hong Kong being the most popular elections. Even though we are talking about only few votes compared to the whole sum of around the 3 million votes given, the effect measured in percentages locally is big.

Kotler and Armstrong (2015, 151) suggest the final touch of leading the consumers to the purchase decision to be offer, reward, contact or opportunity. The voting is usually described as a privilege and duty, so the reward is considered to be more mental than material. What the Consulate can do is to provide the opportunity by being located to a well reached place and make sure that the message reaches everybody on time.

There is an opportunity of reward by making the event communal and brand it well amongst the local Finns by organizing a possibility to meet fellow citizens and maybe to drink a cup of coffee and having a cinnamon roll at the site. Even though the Consulate does not have resources to bake the buns it has the power to organize it and even better give a local charity or other community a possibility to cater the event.

5.4.2 Stage Five, Conviction - Fans of Finland

It has been said that the most convincing marketing strategy is the buzz, WOM (word of mouth) and recommendation or testimony of a trusted person. I would consider these trusted persons and buzzers as the fans of Finland who already have a relationship to the country and have probably visited there. These would be the around 100 exchange students visiting Finland yearly and the travelers who have found the country interesting and might have some peculiar reason to like specifically Finland; Moomins, metal music, education, nature, prosperity or job opportunities of past (Nokia).

These "Fans of Finland" are essential spokespersons for Finland and it could be beneficiary to recognize them. There has been an idea of gathering Finland alumnus together under a Facebook group or something similar. I found this idea good and a very little demanding act. This small gesture could unite people and make them more visible

and powerful asset for country brand work the Consulate is doing in the area. This group could be used as a communication channel and I believe people in it would find it even flattering to be part of it. People like to be recognized, united and given a special status. This group would be the buzz starter and connection point between the common citizens of Hong Kong and Consulate.

When talking about the locals who have visited Finland it is also important to unite them and connect them to the Consulate due to the rotation the Foreign Ministry has. All the employees sent from Finland will be in the country only few years, maximum four and even if the staff won't change simultaneously something gets always lost in the transition. The personal connections to the locals are hard to find and this type of collection of people open to Finland and Finns is like a silver plate offered to the Consulate and new Finnish workers sent to the city.

The reputation and buzz these "fans" create is also the strongest tool to do the stage five conviction work against better known destinations in Europe. They are the ones saying "go for it, it will be amazing" for hesitating students and travelers and are the most reliable source of information.

5.4.3 Stage Four, Preference - Curious and Participating ones

To become a "stage five Fan of Finland" one needs to visit the country and find the visit as a good decision. This visit and experiment moving to Finland or committing to do business there might start by applying the residence permit or finding actively information about the topics such as education and participating the events offering that knowledge.

To become this far the stages one to three are already passed and there is probably some stage five influencing people in their lives or outskirts of the personal circle of friends and acquaintance.

Stage four people are seriously interested in Finland and their interest needs to be enforced and their paths need to be made easy. Otherwise Finland loses them to competitors who provide same type of environment and make the entering easier.

Because Finland needs to be the top choice, the entry needs to be made as easy as possible. There is an eternal controversy and problem how to welcome that type of people Finland benefits the most and offer asylum for those who really need it. At the same time the very primitive reason to move is to seek for better life and opportunities and the question is who gets to decide where our fellow people are allowed to go. Because of the

high prosperity level of living in Hong Kong and somewhat remote location from the troublesome countries of the world, there is no asylum seekers or refugees coming from the city for now.

Because of the living quality of the people; education level, wealth and language skills of the Hongkongese is so good the barriers should be low and entering to study or start a business in Finland should be made easy. Since the consulate can only work as a consultant of the local situation towards Finland but can't actively change the legislation the role left is to serve the people as well and helpfully as possible.

The first impression of Finland and the interest has been created by maybe some other institute or incidence, but the first impression to work with the country might be formed in the Consulate. When we talk about students the visit to the Consulate to apply the residence permit it could be the first time they meet a Finn and it will be the first impression during their journey to Finland. If this experience is unpleasant and overly difficult, I believe it does not courage people to continue their experience further than the initial six months study or short visit. This means Finland stays at the side of the giver but does not gain anything as an education or services provided.

The price point of Finnish education is definitely right or at least very competitive. I believe in the business sector there is still work to be done to positioning Finnish businesses wise. One of the main image factors from the Hong Kong perspective is the trust and image of fairness. People in Hong Kong are very competitive and used to relatively fair British justice system. They are not ready to play in Chinese rules. Finland is seen as a peaceful and trustworthy place to invest in long term. The Communication and service of the Consulate as a consultant to help the people in the process is a meaningful task and post. The actions and services are key elements to gain the trust of the stage four customers and turn them loyal stage five buyers.

5.4.4 Stage Three, Liking - Tourists

Tourist and travelers are aware of the concept of Nordics. They don't necessarily place Finland, Sweden and Norway right on the map and Iceland seems to be just next to Finland, but they like what they know. These stage three customers are traveling to Finland or more precisely to Nordics or Europe and experiencing Western culture at least. Just like the Europeans talk about United States, China and Africa as a homogenous country the Europe and Nordics are concepts that are not too well separated and not necessarily seen as a big area of full of different languages and identities and geographical landscapes.

This situation is a challenge and opportunity to the county image work done in the Consulate. The education sector already identifies via Pisa studies as a unique Finnish talent, but the tourism should find the unique selling point such as the snow castle in Kemi or the glass igloos which make people to choose to go specifically to Finland. In a global perspective the situation is good. I believe Tallinn is a “giveaway” destination for people coming to Finland, but Finland is not a secondary target for travelers going to Sweden but more like equal partner.

What the consulate can do here is to make sure nothing prevents people going to Finland. There should not be difficulties getting visas if needed and if Finland is only one of the destinations on a larger European tournée it should be made reachable in the minds of the tourists.

Finnair as a company has a big role in marketing Finland since it flights straight from Hong Kong to Helsinki-Vantaa. Their interest is also to serve as courier to other European destinations and the co-operation and lay over possibility should be strengthened. The Consulate is not there to favor or market individual companies but since Finnair is the only Finnish flight company operating in the whole area, I see that there could be possibility to tighten the cooperation. Finnair has also local flight crew who will apply the residence permits from the Consulate and the process should be made easier by serving them better. I see the possibility to host events helping the future crew to fill in the applications. This could also be done with the local universities in a biannual basis to strengthen the relationship and brightening the image amongst the international coordinators and students. This type of events would eventually ease the workload of the Consulate too since the same questions that keep repeating could be answered collectively once and face to face.

The most difficult task for the Consulate is to try to follow the general opinion of Finland and guide it to the positive direction. Global trends and very surprising events might turn the image of the whole country quite fast. Sweden for example suffered from the chain reaction that started from the political difficulties of a bookstore keeper with the Mainland China government. The storekeeper has a Swedish nationality and he was captured by the Chinese police. Sweden got some exposure in Chinese media and the tone was not positive as Swedish diplomats were trying to help their fellow citizen, traitor Chinese from another perspective. Months later a Chinese family traveling in Sweden did not have a proper reservation in a hotel. They were guided out of the hotel and not allowed to stay at the lobby for a night. As a consequence of a quite unattached events made even quite

good media reading skilled Hongkongese doubt the Swedish people and canceling their reservations in fear of being mistreated in a hostile and racist country of Sweden.

5.4.5 Stage Two, Knowledge - Everybody who knows Santa

Not everybody knows that Santa Claus is from Finland, but everybody at least knows Santa. In a way everybody in Hong Kong knows Finland. The situation would not be the same on the other side of the border in Mainland China, for that reason the around 8 million people living in an area size of Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Kauniainen and Kirkkonummi is quite unique and not comparable to average Chinese city or area.

Despite this recognition level these stage two customers don't expect to meet anybody from Finland in Hong Kong, and they are not expecting to have anything to do with Finland. A good example of the difference in recognition level between Finland and for example England the former colonial motherland of Hong Kong is that most of the time in Hong Kong when you tell that you are from Finland you get the answer "aah England! you are English!". When you repeat Finland, they still doubt what they hear but eventually recognize the country after pitching few key words such as; Nordics, Sweden, Chicago Bulls Lauri Markkanen or Mika Häkkinen.

These stage two customers are fruitful ground. But to get them interest in Finland lot of work is needed. By supporting the local events representing Finnish products and culture is the best way to distribute the general information. There should be something rising the interest of an individual. The role of the Consulate is to make sure that Finland is available just as the other Nordic countries or Europe and support the events that reaches the masses such as Christmas markets and winter Olympic themed exhibitions. Consulate is also convincing partner with great credibility. It is very hard for individual companies to gain this type of position.

5.4.6 Stage One, Awareness - Young people and first-time travelers

We have all been at stage one. Regarding to many countries in the world we are still at stage one. We have studied the location of all the countries in the world and the capitals too but could be that we don't remember them anymore because we have not heard anything about them ever since. That might also be a good thing since the reputation of for example Bagdad might take a generation to heal after the city itself has been rebuild and the old image of glory days stays in our minds. But in general, not hearing from the country ever since the high school is not a sign of a successful brand work.

For the purpose of keeping Finland on the minds of Hongkongese there has been a habit of sending few reporters to Finland yearly. The topic of the trip varies from year to year. The visits might be about a circular economy conference held in Finland or another business-related event. The journalists have usually written about that yearly topic and have been picked up according to the topic. The trips have always created other stories published in the big local Cantonese written newspapers too. This is a good way to create relationship with local journalists but also to grow the public awareness of Finland.

The brand work made via journalists sent to Finland is not a new trick, but it seems to serve the purpose even today. I believe one of the key elements is to reach the people with their native language to make it as easy as possible to access the information and narrow the gap of knowledge.

Since the recognition level is low in this group the general education should also be considered. The good reputation of Finland in education sector creates interest towards the country but also raises the awareness of the Nordic hemisphere of the globe amongst the teachers in general.

Basic subjects such as history and geography can be taught from very many perspectives and in Europe it is naturally concentrated in the European history. "Finding" America and China is often mentioned when talking about early inventions but the general knowledge is quite weak. The same happens in Asia and China. China has a rich history and wide geographical landscape to be studied and subjects popular in America such as black history studies are never heard of. My guess is that many if not most of the Chinese have not even seen a Caucasian person in real life not to mention an African or any other dark-skinned people. Even though the big and famous cities of China such as Beijing and Shanghai have had their international history for centuries most of the Chinese live in rural areas or super cities that are not known or reached by Westerners.

We can rise this awareness by lifting Finland to the history but competing with the invention of gunpowder or finding a new continent it is a big challenge. As a small country we could rather be known from the "niches", smaller phenomenon and many peculiar details interested by specialized groups. Maybe there could be some specific interest point for everyone, but not one that would be globally recognized such as food from Italy or Fashion from France.

I believe that Finland has a good start to create awareness and even fan base around more marginal phenomenon that might one day grow as a global trend such as K-pop

from Korea or Manga cartoons from Japan. We already have architecture and furniture design classics, Moomins and Marimekko that does not have to be as known as Gucci but could be known amongst one group of people. There is a strong basis for technology knowledge recognition and “niche” of cell phones from Nokia era. Maybe because of that history and knowledge Huawei has now Finnish head designer?

Like mentioned the educations sector is excited about the Nordic style of teaching, some like the circular economy and recycling models and others the lakes and nature. In my opinion dreaming of big hit is not necessary but emphasizing the startups and marginal phenomenon as widely and wide-open eyes as possible might be the key to reach people from the low recognition stage one.

Earlier on chapter 6.3.7 mentioned study about the country image and how it is formed in very young age is a relevant observation regarding to stage one customers. This stage customer group is also specially related to young people just because of those observations and studies.

6 Recommendations for communication in social media

After recognizing stakeholder groups and given some suggestions how to plan the communication the very last research questions about communication channels is to be answered and the recommendations paired with the different stakeholders.

This chapter studies the digital atmosphere and platforms in Hong Kong and provides some concrete ideas and suggestions for the daily communication. Because of the nature of the Consulate the communication balances between marketing Finland and reporting current domestic and foreign issues two ways without forgetting serving the citizens. One of the core elements is the country image work but there is no budget allocated straight to do the communication or even marketing around the topic. That is why effective but mostly free social media channels play major role in communication work. In the end of this chapter there will be given some recommendations about the communication content the stakeholders (recognized by the buyer readiness theory) should be approached with based on dialogue content dimensions presented in chapter 4.3.1.

6.1 Opportunity driven new media platforms and Asian business culture

Hongkongese are very trend conscious and fast-moving smartphone users. They believe in word of mouth recommendations and testimonials. All the information is searched online. They have a Western style of ability to read the media and many Hongkongese are very critical when it comes to traditional Chinese medias. But at the same time the Chinese platforms, sites and apps are widely used hand in hand with the “Western” sites. Opposite to the Mainland China the social media platforms and internet are free to use and there is no restrictions, censorship or limitations.

In my opinion Hongkongese are used to pick up the cherries of the Western and Chinese cultures and go around the negative and not so popular practices of both. There is a long history doing it and I believe it is quite natural reaction and outcome of living between two very different cultures. As a matter of fact, one could say Hongkongese were pushed to create that type of culture. There are various moments in Hong Kong’s history described by Steve Tsang (2007) in his book *Modern History of Hong Kong* where Hong Kong majority, ethnic Chinese are left by them self but restricted and controlled only when it comes to the British colonial culture core values such as; justice, freedom and business. As long as the locals would not compromise the business opportunities, acted according to the main principles of the law, they were free men to speak up their mind and practice

the profession and religion what they wanted. Hongkongese were left to build their homes and culture the way they wanted.

In my opinion these principals are the base of Hongkongese culture even today. The most convenient Chinese inventions and platforms are widely used but democratic values and rights are highly appreciated, and privacy laws are very tight. As an example, most of the Hongkongese have Wechat and Alipay because they chat and visit their Mainland relatives and friends frequently but credit cards, local reloadable Octopus card and cash are more common paying methods. But when you cross the boarded to the Mainland China the taxi drivers might be reluctant to take your cash and demand payment online via one of the apps mentioned. On the other hand, Hongkongese are tied to the Western culture and many have relatives in Canada and America what makes the Western apps and news as relevant as the Chinese.

6.2 Top sites and channels

Globally popular sites such as Google, YouTube and Facebook are also the most used pages in Hong Kong. Facebook is actually ranked higher than it is at the moment in Finland. The local specialties are Baidu, QQ and Discuss.com. In Finland you can see Russian VK, is.fi and yle.fi peaking instead.

	Site	Daily Time on Site <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily Pageviews per Visitor <input type="checkbox"/>	% of Traffic From Search <input type="checkbox"/>	Total Sites Linking In <input type="checkbox"/>
1	Google.com	12:12	14.94	0.50%	2,220,169
2	Youtube.com	11:14	6.46	17.00%	1,712,838
3	Facebook.com	18:15	7.94	8.20%	4,074,343
4	Baidu.com	6:43	4.67	5.00%	148,800
5	Google.com.hk	3:25	5.06	3.00%	8,906
6	Amazon.com	9:27	8.90	21.30%	523,945
7	Yahoo.com	4:37	4.45	7.80%	462,644
8	Discuss.com.hk	5:43	3.13	21.30%	5,084
9	Wikipedia.org	3:54	2.94	71.60%	1,291,611
10	Taobao.com	4:54	3.55	3.10%	37,603
11	Qq.com	3:50	3.97	3.30%	336,173

Figure 6. Top Sites in Hong Kong winter 2019 (Alexa 2019a)

When comparing so called social media channels Facebook is the obvious winner and even though it has lost its users to Twitter lately it is still clearly the most popular social media platform. The rise of Twitter use is quite clearly related to the political unrests

started summer 2019 but the global trend has also shown dropping numbers in Facebook users when Twitter and Instagram have steadily gained some.

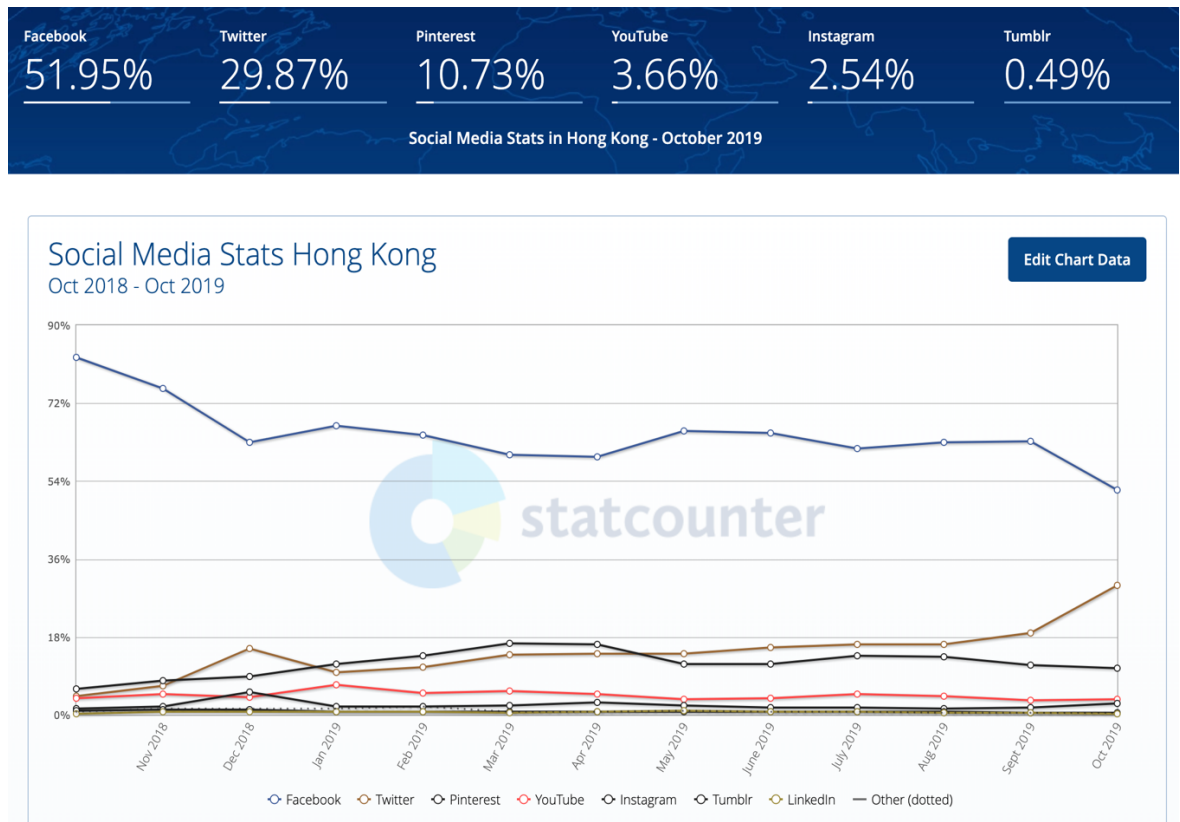


Figure 7. Evolution of top social media sites in Hong Kong 2018-2019 (Statcounter 2019)

6.3 Profiles and usability of the most popular sites

It is not possible for the Consulate to follow the trends of social media as quickly as they might change, but it is important for all the businesses to be aware of the changes and recognize the trends. To choose the right channels is to choose the right battles. The channels should be right for the image of the company and reach the target groups or stakeholders. There is also the question of resources that should be prioritized. If there are enough people to create material for the platforms or enough workforce to distribute material created by others or enough money to buy and distribute the essential parts to keep a social media channel open and alive, why not to do it. But most of the companies should choose carefully the battlefronts by defining the targets and allocating the workload accordingly.

6.3.1 Facebook

Luckily Facebook is popular globally. That gives the possibility to reach Finnish, Hongkongese and other nationalities simultaneously. It is also used and approved

relatively widely amongst the different age and socio-economic groups. Since it has been available widely for over ten years the usage of the platform is familiar for most of the Consulate workers and does not necessarily need specialized skills and training.

Because of the algorithm of the platform the company page announcements and posts are not as widely spread as hoped for I would like to rise a question of using some money for Facebook marketing. There is budget for print and commercial materials but the budget has never been used for digital purposes. I am confident that advertising the key events the Consulate participates would be beneficial and reach new customers. At the moment email marketing platform Lyyti is used to send invitations but lot of work is needed if the receiver list is tried to widen by doing “cold calls” or by sending emails to receiver lists that are gathered manually.

I am sure that paid leaflets, invitations and maybe even printed announcement in newspapers are used or have been used by the missions globally but for some reason this practice and silence approval towards social media marketing is not considered and has not been taken to the practice. When it come to the costs, Facebook marketing is quite cheap, very easy to control and measure and relatively easy to run.

6.3.2 Instagram

Consulate has an Instagram page which has started to gather some audience. The biggest follower group are Finnis, second biggest Hongkongese and then other missions and Hongkongese companies. Regarding to the low percentage Instagram has amongst the other platforms in Picture 2 I believe the profile and style of the page is right for the Consulate.

At the moment it is a great extra next to Facebook, but the global trend shows decreasing numbers for Facebook users and the role of Instagram is still unknown. It might replace Facebook or be left behind when a newer platform such as TikTok or something else takes over globally.

6.3.3 Twitter

Twitter should be used by the Consulate to deliver fact-oriented information. The platform could make Finland a participant of the conversations regarding Hong Kong in Finland but specially to make the country visible in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, Twitter has been in the central of so many scandals and the statements are monitored by the public so critically and wide that it has been considered as a risky and even a fearful platform.

Twitter would give a great opportunity to participate political issues and influence the conversation, but it would need commitment, expertise and teamwork of several people. That is considered too consuming for the small unit of Hong Kong Consulate. In my opinion Twitter requires also a bit character and approval of being controversial. This raises especially high risk of misunderstanding because of cultural differences.

6.3.4 Baidu

Baidu is the world fourth most used web page according to Amazon Alexa service (Alexa 2019b). Baidu in a nutshell is a Chinese Google. It is world's second largest search engine site that serves mostly Chinese speaking population. If Foreign Ministry, Business Finland or Visit Finland are following the Google hits and content regarding Finland they should also do it in Baidu. For a small Consulate it is too big of a challenge to do it by themselves.

6.3.5 Discuss.com.hk

Discuss.com.hk would be interesting to follow since it is a free discussion platform in Cantonese where the topics variate from football to politics. It could be described as Suomi24 or vauva.fi. According to the site called Great Firewall Discuss.com.hk is blocked in Mainland China meaning the discussion is free and includes topics that are not favoring the Chinese Central Government.

Some Finnish companies participate conversations regarding their businesses or field of business in discussion forums and I find it very good grass level marketing. It requires some monitoring but the questions and support search from the forums are often repeating themselves and are quite easy to answer. Gaining customers and good reputation could be done quite easily especially in B2C retail sector.

6.3.6 QQ

QQ is the messenger application owned and developed by Shenzhen based corporation Tencents. Tencent (2019) describes the company in its web pages following way: "Tencent uses technology to enrich the lives of Internet users. Our communications and social platforms Weixin and QQ connect users with each other, with digital content and daily life services in just a few clicks". Tencents is Chinese mega company that consists elements and businesses used in China (and nowadays also globally) similar to Google, Facebook, Alibaba and Supercell all together. Actually, Supercell was bought by Tencents

some years ago. Despite the popularity the page does not offer anything the Consulate could consider to be used at the moment.

6.3.7 Pinterest

Pinterest has a relatively small but globally recognized audience. In Hong Kong it is four times more used than Instagram and has risen to above 10% during 2018-2019 (See picture 3). I believe it could work well as a tool to boost Country image and collecting a “mood boards” of four seasons. At the moment for example cities and universities in Finland that have Instagram pages could reach more people from Hong Kong by using Pinterest. Regardless that Pinterest has never bloomed so strong as Facebook or other platforms it has been available for years already and drop of Facebook has apparently made people to search for other platforms.

Because Pinterest is picture based platform it is a good solution for regions and stakeholders speaking multiple languages. It is also relatively easy to use and could be trusted into hands of frequently changing interns. It is not political or controversial platform and could be used to deliver many types of images about Finland. Overall Pinterest seems to be statically something to look for and follow. It could be a good platform to have in the roster of communication channels and tools of the Consulate.

6.4 Content of the messages in social media

Dialogue content dimensions (Zifei & al. 2017, 5-6) and customer readiness stages (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151) studied and applied to the context of the Consulate communication earlier could be also cross-referred to get guidelines for the most effective communication messages. Just as Zifei & al. (2017, 5-6) wrote in their article, the most valuable asset of social media communication is engagement.

All the different readiness stage customers from one to six should receive engaging messages, but I believe the stage four to two could respond best for the promotional messages and those type of messages could engage them best and get them to the next readiness stage.

Most primary one-way messages are maybe most basic and informative type of messages. Stage one to two would gain most of these messages since even the basic info is relevant for them. One-way information is often also quite general and not targeted to specific customer or stakeholder groups and the quantitative values of the message is more appreciated than the qualitative. By saying this I mean the spread and reading times

of the message is probably the number followed and the outcome sought for. When the message is more specific the target group must usually be better known and smaller such as the stage six to three customers are.

The following figure divides the six different readiness stage stakeholders to three content function groups and guides how to communicate with them especially in the social media.

Buyer Readiness Stages	Stage Six, Purchase Finnish citizens			X
	Stage Five, Conviction Fans of Finland			X
	Stage Four, Preference Curious Participants		X	X
	Stage Three, Liking Tourists		X	X
	Stage Two, Knowledge Everybody who knows Santa	X	X	X
	Stage One, Awareness Young people & First-time travelers	X	X	X
		One-way Information	Promotion and mobilization	Dialogue

Dialogue Content Dimensions

Table 3. Buyer readiness stages (Kotler & Armstrong 2015, 151) combined with Dialogue content dimensions (Zifei & al. 2017, 5-6)

By creating space by using social media for stakeholders to share their experiences. Facilitating place for the best market and communication influencers there is - the customers - the Consulate would gain a group of brand ambassadors working for Finland. People want to share their experiences, help and guide by nature. Activating those people would create an extra voice for Finland.

There could be for example shared events at universities with a Consular representative and with a local young person who has already been in Finland encouraging the students to choose Finland for exchange destination and then easing the path with the bureaucracy.

Listening people also enhances the experience and tide with Finland, it could be considered as an after sales effort. The easiest customers to gain are the returning customers who have bought the product once and feel like having worth of their money or being heard. Some even say that well served customers who have originally complained about the product are likely to be the most loyal customers in future. By using that selling theory as an example I do not try to find unsatisfied travelers to be nurtured by the Consulate, but I would like to emphasize how listening and caring creates a special bound and moment to enrich the experience.

7 Discussion

The last chapter evaluates the benefits of the outcomes and concludes the biggest and most meaningful findings of the thesis.

Finding answers for the research questions presented in chapter 3.2. rise also some suggestions. The following paragraphs summarize the answers, question by question and presents suggestions and follow up questions in brief.

Overall updating and finalizing the communication plan that is already drafted (in Appendix 1) could remind and clarify the main messages for the whole small team of the Consulate. Every team member has a place as a communicator. If it is hard to see oneself as a member of the communication team, everybody should at least find themselves as a customer from one of the readiness stages, hopefully at least from the stage five “purchasing” fan of Finland. This finalizing work of the plan could have been chosen as the main objective of the thesis and I believe the tangible outcome would have been very appreciated and useful guide for the Consulate to use.

Attaching planning of the communication to the weekly meetings, yearly plans and budget could give the whole process a backbone and kickstart. The budget and weekly planning create a natural annual wheel that should not be separated from the communication calendar that consists the cultural festivities, latest developments and news provided from the Ministry.

The statistic of the pages; social media and web pages could be monitored, and the statistic and observations documented, so that there would be coherent information for present and coming members of the Consulate regarding the communication done. That information would highlight success and improving points of messages and could be analyzed and used for further developing of messages. It could be useful to study the content of the messages posted and the reactions and engagement of the audience and create some guidelines for themes and styles creating dialogue.

Next topic to study more could be social media audience the Consulate already has. Who are they exactly and what do they want? This thesis did not study stakeholders’ views of communication by asking them or interviewing them. But the thesis gives some answers for possible needs and anticipate messages of different stakeholders by recognizing them and understanding the level of knowledge and commitment they have towards Finland

and the Consulate. But their voices, wishes and needs are not heard so far. Fruitful cooperation could be experienced with the biggest business partners such as Finnair and private Universities. Cooperation with Finnish Chamber of Commerce could be enforced by studying their needs and expectations. Not to mention the handful of Finnish citizens living in area. This group of some 200 people could realistically be reached out. That could have also been a potential research direction of this thesis. Since planning and communication are seen in Foreign Ministry or at least in the Consulate somewhat unidirectional the dialogical communication theme could have been improved and studied more deeply. It actually might have been more coherent theme to study and the theoretical background of it is, I believe, quite well covered. By saying that I mean the topic is well studied and there would be various good quality researches done regarding to it and numerous excellent theories to implement and use for finding solutions.

Writing this thesis enabled me to get to know the communication plans of many missions in Asia and communication guidelines that the Foreign Ministry has and gives. In the end of this process it also summarized everything I had learned and reflected while working for the Consulate regarding everyday communicational tasks and practices.

Maybe there are people who make writing plans and stick to them, but me and my family catch fire only when the deadline approach. Sometimes it is a heavy pattern to follow, but it also keeps the project current and the idea packed tight. Exceptionally most of the text in this thesis was written and literature reviewed long before the final spurt. That is a good thing but at the same time it was miraculous to follow how the situation in Hong Kong changed and for example the communicational topics that seemed relevant just faded away as the troubles in Pearl River Delta area and in China rose. This raises the question of reliability and validity of the work too.

The literature review basis of the work is not expected to expire. Some of the theories were born during the World War I and seem to be relevant still and again. On the other hand, the dramatical changes in tourism effect on the stakeholders recognized in the empirical part and that information might be outdated at least for now, but maybe in the future too. I believe that this is the nature of the communication. The very basic ideas and theories remain, but the adaptation and implementation part need to be done over and over again. And just as mentioned earlier, since for example the stakeholders themselves have not been separately heard in this thesis, the assumptions come from the Foreign Ministry perspective and are conclusions made by experience of the writer and content of the material available. The opposite sides perspective studied more strongly could shift the accent to something else. What should be noticed though is that the fundamental

problem of the communication being unidirectional was certainly pointed out and recognized and there has not been intention to repeat that practice.

Since the case study was not commissioned there is no feedback from the Consulate, but the pages are read and completing of the work expected by them. I sincerely hope these findings to be useful for the team working there now and in the future. As mentioned in the very beginning, the political landscape; changes in the legislation and power balance will affect dramatically to the everyday life of people and the work at the Consulate now and future. It might sometimes be frustrating to plan ahead without knowing if public gatherings are even aloud or whether the borders are open for tourists and exchange students. But without preparation and planning so little can be done if and when the space, time and possibility actualizes.

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